Gazetteer

The Tanaguchi Foundation

What is it famous for? Without doubt, the Tanaguchi Foundation's major achievement was the funding of a cyclotron at Osaka University between 1937 and 1943. The construction of that facility was a major boost to Osaka University and enabled it to attract many young scientists to its new Physics department. One of the Department's first Professors was Hideki Yukawa, the theoretical physicist who in 1949 became the first Japanese scientist to receive the Nobel prize.

How did it start? In 1929, Toyosaburo Tanaguchi set up a private fund to promote research into basic science, in accordance with his late father's will. The initial fund of one million yen (about £5,300 or $8,800 at today's exchange rate) came from the family's association with textile industries located around Osaka.

What else has the Foundation done? Now, it is best known for sponsoring annual scientific symposia, but before the Second World War, it gave funds to promising young researchers. Interestingly, half of all the successful applicants came from Osaka University, reflecting the geographical location of the Tanaguchi family. After the war, the Foundation's assets were substantially eroded by hyperinflation, and this led it to restrict funding to theoretical physics and pure mathematics, whose monetary demands were presumably not that great. In this manner, the Foundation continued until 1976.

What happened in 1976? The Foundation underwent a massive upheaval, selling land in Amagasaki to Sumitomo Metal Co. With the resulting enormous cash injection it was able to increase the number of symposia dramatically and expand into numerous fields, including various aspects of biology, such as neurobiology, molecular, cell and developmental biology. By 1989 the symposia had extended far beyond their initial boundaries, and had started to promote Religion, Philosophy and Art History.

What is special about the symposia? The symposia are legendary for their hospitality. Invitees are flown to Japan First Class, and given the full limousine and tea-ceremony treatment. Perhaps if they had been slightly less lavish, the Foundation's money might have gone a bit further. At the time of writing, its funds are dwindling. As a result, the trustees have decided that the Tanaguchi Foundation will be closed in 1999, thus ending 70 years of scientific funding.

Are there many other Japanese philanthropists? Surprisingly, private foundations, and indeed charitable funding in general, is substantially lower in Japan than in the USA or the UK. Perhaps the only other major foundation is a charity set up by Ryoichi Sasagawa, a right-wing business magnate who made enormous sums of money from organizing the gambling associated with boat racing and cycling. The Sasagawa Foundation — which has recently been renamed the Japan Foundation as a result of criticism of its benefactor's right-wing connections — provides funds for Japanese scientists to study abroad. Despite the Foundation's renaming, it continues to be controversial, and it recently named Ayako Sono, a major Japanese novelist and prominent Roman Catholic, as successor to its founder.

Intron

A chiming biological clock?

Resetting the biological clock: mediation of nocturnal circadian shifts by glutamate and NO.
Jian M. Ding, Dong Chen, E. Todd Weber, Lia E. Faiman, Michael A. Rea, Martha U. Gillette.

Science **266:**1713–1717.

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